

We claim:

1. A method of transferring data from a remote server to a remote client over a communications link, comprising:
  - 5 sending a request from the remote client to the remote server for specific data accompanied by a compression request for transmission at a specified compression ratio;
  - receiving said request for specific data at the remote server and retrieving said specific data from a data source;
  - providing an agent at the remote server to intercept
  - 10 said retrieved data and compress at least part of said retrieved data prior to transmission in accordance with said compression request;
  - transmitting said retrieved data in compressed form over said communications link to said remote client; and
  - 15 decompressing said compressed data at said remote client to restore said retrieved data to an uncompressed intelligible form.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said agent compresses image portions of said data.
- 20 3. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said image portions are compressed using a lossy compression algorithm.
4. A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein said lossy compression algorithm comprises a discrete wavelet transform.
- 25 5. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said images are compressed using a lossless compression algorithm.
6. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said remote client sends at least one further request for all or part said specific data at a reduced compression ratio.

7. A method as claimed in claim 6, wherein said client sends a request for an identified portion of said data at a reduced compression ratio.

8. A method as claimed in claim 7, wherein said specific data comprises a web page stored on a web server providing said data source.

9. A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein said identified portion comprises a portion of an image forming part of said web page.

10. A remote server for transferring data on demand to a remote client over a communications link, comprising:  
a storage medium for storing transferable data;  
a processing unit for receiving a request from the remote client for specific data accompanied by a compression request for transmission at a specified compression ratio, said processing unit retrieving said data from a data source;

an agent running on the remote server for intercepting said data retrieved from said data source and compressing at least part of said retrieved data prior to transmission in accordance with said compression request; and

a port on said remote server for transmitting said retrieved data in compressed form over said communications link to said remote client, whereby said compressed data can be decompressed at said remote client to restore said retrieved data to an uncompressed intelligible form.

11. A remote server as claimed in claim 10, wherein said agent compresses image portions of said data.

12. A remote server as claimed in claim 10, wherein said agent employs a lossy compression algorithm.

13. A remote server as claimed in claim 12, wherein said lossy compression algorithm comprises a discrete wavelet transform.

5 14. A remote server as claimed in claim 10, wherein said agent employs a lossless compression algorithm.

15. A remote server as claimed in claim 10, wherein said remote server is responsive to at least one further request from said remote client for all or part said specific data at a reduced compression ratio.

10 16. A remote server as claimed in claim 15, wherein said remote server is responsive to a request from said remote client for an identified portion of said data at a reduced compression ration.

15 17. A remote server as claimed in claim 10, wherein said processing unit retrieves said data from a an Internet content server providing said data source.